

**2006 SUMMARY AND 2007 PROSPECTS:
RESEARCH ACTIVITIES PANEL REPORT TO THE SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

APRIL 20, 2007

Prepared by

**Chris Harrold, PhD
Chair of the Research Activities Panel**

Overview

The Research Activities Panel (RAP) of the MBNMS serves to accomplish four goals:

- Advise sanctuary staff on conservation science issues that will influence policy (*e.g.* address research questions in the Joint Management Plan (JMP))
- Review of research issues and documents for SAC and sanctuary staff
- Facilitate the exchange of regional research information and create opportunities for project coordination
- Convey regional research needs and opportunities to the SAC

The RAP meets six times per year at science and research institutions throughout the sanctuary. RAP membership is comprised of scientists from 14 marine science disciplines:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ○ Biological oceanography | ○ Marine policy |
| ○ Deep-sea ecology | ○ Nearshore ecology |
| ○ Estuarine ecology | ○ Physical oceanography |
| ○ Fisheries | ○ Shelf and slope ecology |
| ○ Marine & coastal geology | ○ Social sciences |
| ○ Marine conservation biology | ○ Water quality |

There is a primary and an alternate representative for each discipline. In addition to discipline, members are selected to represent key scientific research institutions among the more than 40 science and research organizations within the sanctuary.

Presentations to the RAP

In 2006 the RAP heard presentations on the following topics:

- Research initiatives of the Santa Cruz lab of the US Geological Survey

- The Pacific Coast Ocean Observing System (PACOOS). This is a regional effort of NOAA's national Integrated Ocean Observing System and its purpose is to promote sustainable use of resources, restore healthy ecosystems and ensure public health.
- SeaGrant Extension Program. The purpose of this program is to provide statewide research and advice on the socioeconomics and human dimensions of state fisheries, including education and outreach to coastal communities.
- Safe Seas 2006. This was a NOAA-led emergency response exercise to test the ability of all public agencies to work together under an incident command center in the event of a large-scale catastrophe such as an oil spill.
- RAP procedures, protocols and membership. This was the final discussion in a 2-year effort to evaluate, redefine and implement improved procedures and protocols for the RAP.
- Update and description of the Marine Mapping Initiative. The Monterey Bay Sanctuary Foundation was awarded \$1.2 million to undertake a seafloor mapping initiative. The focus of the initiative is to provide high resolution information on depth, relief and habitat type of the seafloor from mean higher high water to 3 miles offshore. Additional funding sources include CDF&G, the Ocean Protection Council and the California Coastal Conservancy.
- Long-term monitoring research at the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve

Issues Addressed by the RAP

The RAP addressed the following issues in 2006:

- Research Permits Marine research in the MBNMS frequently requires a permit from the sanctuary if one or more of the prohibited activities must be undertaken in the course of the research. Typically the sanctuary is very efficient at processing permits and permits are almost always granted. The RAP addressed and provided advice to sanctuary staff on several issues related to research-related permits that have arisen over the years.
 - The research community is seeking ways to streamline the permit process (e.g., blanket permits issued to scientific research organizations)
 - Sanctuary staff should consider giving presentations to research institutions highlighting MBNMS contributions to research as well as how to navigate the permit process
 - What is the role of the RAP in the sanctuary's research permit process?
 - Should the MBNMS act as a clearinghouse for all permits that might be required for marine research projects?
 - How can permit-related navigation on the MBNMS web site be improved?
- Sanctuary Currents Each year the RAP helps decide the topic for the annual Sanctuary Currents research symposium co-sponsored by AMBAG and the

sanctuary. In 2006 the focus of Sanctuary Currents was marine protected areas. In 2007 Sanctuary Currents focused on ocean observing systems.

- Marine Protected Areas The RAP was asked by the sanctuary to provide advice related to both the state and federal processes related to marine protected areas. In federal waters, the RAP was called on to provide recommendations and information to the MBNMS Marine Protected Areas Working Group during the offshore MPA consideration and development process. In state waters, several RAP members participated as scientific advisors in the state MLPA central coast MLPA initiative. The RAP was briefed on progress of the MLPA and provided input during the discussions.
- Research Vessel *Fulmar* The MBNMS took delivery of the new research vessel *Fulmar* in 2006. The RAP reviewed and provided input on the sanctuary's process and priorities for allocating ship time for research.

Focus Areas for 2007

The focus for the RAP in 2007 will largely be driven by the Joint Management Plan. The initiatives within the plan that are particularly relevant to the interests and expertise of RAP members include desalination, benthic impacts of bottom trawling, Davidson Seamount, introduced species, SIMoN and ecosystem monitoring, marine protected areas and tidepool protection. The RAP will host presentations and discussions on these topics to become better informed, to identify gaps in our knowledge and to identify and take advantage of opportunities to move these initiatives forward. Throughout 2007 sanctuary staff may call on the RAP or RAP members to provide advice and expertise on these elements of the plan.